

# Interview Questions

The interview is just one assessment tool to help you make a final hiring decision and must be used in conjunction with other information gathered during the selection process (application forms, resumes, supplemental questionnaire and reference checks).

Evaluating interview information may include identifying candidate's job-related personal characteristics, such as motivation, personality-fit and longevity etc. Remember, personal traits must be considered against the broader context of the job requirements.

Once you have decided based on your selection criteria, the following compilation of questions will guide you in structuring/customizing an interview format.

## Accountability

- Tell us about a time when despite careful planning, things got out of hand or did not work out and what did you do?
- Tell us about an occasion when you chose, for whatever reason, not to finish a particular task?
- Tell us about a time your supervisor was absent, and you had to make a decision?
- What steps have you taken to enable you to become more effective in your team?
- What have you done to become more effective in your career?
- How have you handled special responsibilities or assignments that have been given to you that may not be part of your routine?
- Give us some examples demonstrating how you reacted to short deadlines or pressure situations.
- Tell us about a time when your performance did not live up to your expectations? What did you do?
- How do you motivate yourself to complete unpleasant assignments?

## Advanced

- Would you rather design/develop plans and procedures or implement/manage them? Why?
- Have you had to make and/or implement an unpopular decision/policy and why did you make the decision or support the decision?

## Adaptability

- What types of people do you get along with best?
- How do you work with people whom you don't get along with?
- What role do you play in ensuring a smooth working environment?
- Have you worked for more than one manager and how did you cope with it?
- Give us an example of a crisis situation you were involved in and what did you do to help resolve it?
- What professional situations cause you to feel awkward and how do you handle them?
- How many projects can you handle at a time? Give an example when this occurred.
- How do you prioritize your projects?
- How do you handle repetitive tasks?
- Tell us about a time you had to go above and beyond the call of duty?
- How many levels of management do you deal with?

- Describe a situation when your work was criticized. How did you react?
- Describe a situation where you had to work with someone who was difficult, how did you handle it?
- How do you define conducive work atmosphere?
- What type of work environment appeals to you most?
- How do you deal with conflict?
- In what kinds of situations do you find it most difficult to deal with people?

## **Communication**

- Tell us about the kinds of communication you use at work?
- How important was communication and interaction with others in your last job?
- How would you rate your communications skills? Why?
- What communication tools, forms or documents have you developed for your department?

### **Co-workers**

- What are some ideas/practices to follow to insure effective communications with your coworkers?
- How have you communicated concerns/criticisms to co-workers? Do you feel you were effective?
- How do you communicate with co-workers whom you have personal problems with?

### **Supervisors**

- How can a supervisor establish effective communications with staff?
- Are there additional considerations in communicating to groups of employees versus individual employees?
- What are some good rules to keep in mind when directing employees?
- In what instances, is written communication better than verbal communications?
- Have you ever had to give an employee bad news (vacation denied etc.)? How did you deliver this information?

### **With Your Supervisor**

- Communicating with your supervisor is an important aspect of all our jobs. In addition to being brief, what guidelines should you follow to communicate effectively with your supervisor?
- What are the reasons for communicating upwards to your superiors?
- How would your supervisor rate your communications skills?
- Have you ever had to criticize or tell your supervisor you were wrong? How did you do this?

## **Customer Quality Focus**

- What does good customer service involve?
- Have you ever worked with an irate customer? What did you do?
- What are the steps involved in successfully handling an irate customer?
- Tell us about how you have handled a dissatisfied customer in the past.
- Tell us about your experience in dealing with the public.
- Give us an example of a situation you handled with superior customer service.
- Tell us about a situation in which you dealt with a customer and what you would have

done differently.

- How would you handle a customer who used abusive language?
- Tell us about your experience in working a customer service counter.

### **Advanced**

- Name two criteria essential to establishing effective service standards.
- What are some of the ways to measure customer/user satisfaction?
- What steps can you take to establish a "customer first" attitude in the organization?
- If you wanted to improve the service that you provide to your customers, what would you do first? What efforts have you made in your job to improve the level of customer satisfaction?

## **Inclusiveness**

- Define diversity.
- Tell us about a situation in which you were required to work with diverse groups of people within your organization?
- What was the most important step that you took to work effectively with diverse people?
- To what extent have your assignments required interface with diverse population?
- In what kinds of situations do you find it most difficult to deal with people of varying interest or different background?
- To what extent have you worked in an ethnically, socio-economically, and/or culturally diverse community?
- Tell us about your experience in dealing with a variety of different people.

## **Leadership**

- One of the requirements for this position is that the individual be a self-starter. Give us an example of your ability to be a self-starter.
- In a professional setting, are you a member or a leader of a team?
- Define leadership.
- What personal qualities should a leader have?
- What is your strongest leadership skill and how will it assist you for this job?
- Provide us with an example of your leadership ability.
- What is the importance of leadership in the organization?
- What role does leadership play for a supervisor or manager?
- What have you done to develop your leadership skills?
- Tell us about a situation in which you demonstrated your leadership ability.

### **Advanced**

- What is the difference between a leader and a manager?
- Discuss the different styles of leadership you use in accomplishing your management role.
- What motivational techniques do you use with your work unit?
- What can a supervisor do to enhance an employee's job and the employee's motivation?
- What motivates employees?
- A subordinate has not been successful on a task, how do you offer constructive feedback?
- What are some of the ways in which a supervisor can motivate staff? Or de-motivate staff?

- Tell us about a situation where you motivated your staff to extraordinary accomplishments.
- Cite some of the circumstances under which a leader is not successful. What do you attribute this lack of success to?

## **Occupational Knowledge/Technology Orientation**

- What steps have you taken to enable you to become more effective in your position and what strengths will you bring to this position?
- One of the responsibilities of the position is to better utilize technology when performing the functions of the office. Assuming that there is little use of technology in our office, what would you do to enhance the utilization of technology here?
- If we were to offer you this position, how do you imagine that you would spend your first two weeks?
- What computer software (word processing, spreadsheets, database) programs are you most comfortable using? What specifically did you do with Excel or Access database etc?

## **Team Focus**

- How do you establish working relationship with new people?
- How do you see your responsibilities as a group member?
- What are the important qualities a person should have to become an effective team member?
- What are the characteristics of a successful team?
- Tell us about an unsuccessful team of which you were a member. What, if anything, could you have done differently?
- Tell us about a successful team of which you were a member. What was the most outstanding characteristic of that team? What did you contribute?
- What qualities do you have that make you an effective team player?
- Do you work better by yourself or as part of a team?
- What can you contribute to establish a positive working environment for our team?
- What type of people do you work best with?

## **Advanced**

- What factors would you consider in assembling a project team?
- Name some of the pitfalls to be avoided in building an effective team.
- Give us examples where you introduced ideas or processes that have made a team become more productive?
- What actions can a supervisor take to establish teamwork in the organization?
- What are the advantages, if any, of establishing team goals as opposed to individual goals?

## **Experience and Education**

### **Education**

- How have your educational and work experiences prepared you for this position?
- Why did you choose to major in the course that you have completed or that you are attending?
- What aspect of your education applies to this position?

- What have you done outside of formal education to improve yourself?
- What training opportunities have you taken advantage of and why?
- What additional training will we have to provide for you if we hire you?

### **Experience**

- Tell us about yourself.
- How are you qualified for this job?
- How does your current job qualify you for this position?
- How does your experience qualify you for this job?
- Describe a typical day at your present position.
- Tell us about a specific area of responsibility that you have enjoyed.
- What were your three greatest accomplishments on your last job?
- What are some of the things on your current job you have done well?
- What have you learned from the jobs you've had?
- What is the most difficult assignment you have had?
- What accomplishment on the job are you the most proud of?
- What steps have you taken to improve your job skills?
- What significant contributions have you made to the operation of your work group?
- How has your current position prepared you to take on greater responsibilities?
- What makes you more qualified than the other candidates?
- Why do you want to leave your current job?
- How has your job prepared you to take on greater responsibility?
- Tell us about your qualifications for this position.
- What actions have you taken in the past years to prepare you for this position?
- What steps have you taken in the past two years to improve your qualifications?
- In the areas where your experience falls short for this job, what steps will you take to make up for this shortfall?
- Describe yourself. What skills and abilities do you have?
- Recall an incident where you made a major mistake. What did you do after the mistake was made? What did you learn from this mistake?
- What is the greatest failure you've had? What would you have done differently?
- What action on the job are you the least proud of?
- Tell us about a difficult situation that you encountered and how you resolved it.
- Please tell us about the most difficult job-related task you have faced.

### **Supervision and Management Experience**

- What experience have you had in supervision?
- What is the role of a supervisor?
- What experience have you had in resolving grievances?
- What experience have you had in investigating discrimination/sexual harassment complaints?
- What do you like the best about supervision?
- What do you like the least about supervision?
- What has been your most positive experience in supervision?
- What has been your most negative experience in supervision?
- Which aspect of supervision did you feel the most comfortable with?
- Which aspect of supervision did you feel the least comfortable with?
- Give us an example of a situation that you handled which would demonstrate your ability

to supervise.

- Have you had any experience in applying the provisions of the *Americans With Disabilities Act*?
- Having supervisory experience, you may have run into problems with a member of your staff. What type of problem did you encounter and how did you handle it?
- What aspect of supervision is most difficult for you and why?
- What aspect of supervision is the easiest for you and why?
- Tell us about your most difficult supervisory experience and how did you handle it?
- Tell us about your most difficult supervisory experience and what did you learn from it?
- Have you hired staff? What qualities did you look for?
- Tell us about your experience in supervising clerical staff.
- What experience have you had in supervising field workers?
- Tell us about your experience in supervising professional staff.
- Tell us about your experience in supervising technical staff.
- Have you had an opportunity to supervise staff in several different functions, such as professional and clerical? Tell us about your experience.
- Have you supervised volunteers? Tell us about your experience.
- Under which circumstances would you refer an employee to the employee assistance program?
- What is the most challenging situation that you've had with your subordinate supervisors? How did you handle it?
- How would you assess your ability as a supervisor?
- Describe your most ideal and least ideal boss?
- What work-related items have you been criticized for in the past two years?
- What characteristics are most important in a good manager/supervisor? How have you displayed them?

## **Judgment**

- Describe a project that best demonstrates your analytical ability?
- Tell us about a situation where you made a mistake. How did you handle the mistake and what was the resolution?
- Under what circumstances should you bypass your supervisor and go to your supervisor's supervisor?
- Give us a situation that illustrates your ability to exercise good judgment.
- In instances where you are required to assert yourself, what do you do to assert yourself effectively?
- Tell us of a time work quality had been compromised due to time constraints or resource constraints.

## **Problem Solving**

- What are the essential elements of effective problem solving?
- Provide us with an example of your problem-solving ability.
- Tell us about a situation in which you were required to analyze and solve a complex problem.
- How have you incorporated collaborative problem solving in your organization?
- What are the benefits of participative problem solving?
- When you are confronted with an unprecedented decision, what do you do?

## Strengths and Weaknesses

### Strengths

- We are looking at a lot of great candidates; why are you the best person for this position?
- What are your three personal strengths?
- What can you contribute to our organization?
- Assume that you're one of the top 2 candidates for this position; tell us what may set you apart from the other candidate?
- What are your strengths?
- Give us three adjectives that others would use to describe you?
- What makes an individual successful and why do you think that these attributes make someone successful?
- What part of your current job are you the most comfortable with?
- What are your strong points and how have they helped you to succeed?
- What skills do you have that you feel could enhance this position?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Where do you think your interest in this career comes from?
- What motivates you to improve and progress in your career and why are you motivated by these things?
- To what do you owe your present success?
- What goals have you set for yourself? How are you planning to achieve them?
- Tell us about a situation that would exemplify your integrity.

### Weaknesses

- What is your greatest weakness?
- Name your three greatest weaknesses.
- Which is the worst of your three greatest weaknesses and why?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What part of your current job are you the least comfortable with?
- What are your weak points and how have you overcome them?
- What about yourself would you want to improve
- In which area do you need to make improvements in?
- What are the three areas in which people would say you need to improve?